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JOHN KNOX

R. W. BARBOUR



JOHN KNOX

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1905

JOHN KNOX

BY

R. W. BARBOUR

WITH TWO ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS Lecture was originally delivered in Free St. George's Church, Edinburgh, on 26th November 1882, when the author was minister of the Free Church at Cults. It has been reprinted on the occasion of the Quater-Centenary of Knox's birth.

In issuing a new edition there has been added an address given to an Association of Highland Students at Aberdeen, which deals with an earlier period of Scottish religious life.

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‘I see the steeple of that place where God first in public opened my mouth to His glory, and I am fully persuaded, how weak that ever I now appear, that I shall not depart this life, till that my tongue shall glorify His godly name in that same place.’

JOHN KNOX.

JOHN KNOX was born at the village of Gifford, or at Giffordgate in the town of Haddington, East Lothian, in the year 1505. He was in the cradle when Luther, at the age of twenty-one, abandoned his career as a bachelor of laws, and hid himself and his agony of heart within the walls of the Augustinian Monastery at Erfurt. He was two years old when Melanchthon, a boy of ten, heard his dying father's prophecy of the great storms which were to shake the world, and his prayer that the thought of God might guide Philip through them. He was in his fifth year when Calvin was born.

Like many of his country's noblest sons he came of simple, though honourable, parentage. True natives of Scotland that they were, his father and mother cherished

“The noble wish . . .
To give their child a better bringing up
Than his had been, or hers.”

The grammar-school, the college, the church—these were their plans for their child, as they have so often been of other Scottish parents since. Haddington,

famous then for the study, gave the boy Latin—an indispensable acquirement for the priest's office. He knew enough of it in later years to take a learned delight in the twenty-nine metres of Buchanan's psalms, to return the correspondence of that flower of latinity, John Calvin, to expose a sophist's argument, or to parry, rapier-fashion, a courtier's sneer. Glasgow enrolled him as a student in his eighteenth year (1522). The arts in those days were Aristotle; whose Rhetoric Knox knew, though he had little time to use it, but whose Logic he never forgot to the end. Divinity was Aquinas and the Canon Law. John Major, principal Regent of the university, the one living teacher who left an indelible mark on Knox's mind, taught all three: on the last of them he had light beyond his age. Those principles of popular sovereignty in Church and State which he had learned and professed at Paris passed from him to Knox and Buchanan, and through them have become the common heritage of Scotsmen. The languages of the Renaissance were as yet unknown in Scotland; for with us the Revival of Letters was the daughter of the Reformation. Knox, with his great gift of speech, had a natural love of languages. Greek came to him, twenty years later, with the acquaintance of Wishart, a man of as exquisite learning as character; Hebrew with Calvin's, ten years later still; both of them in time for Knox to take his seat at the table of the Genevan revisers. French he learned first when France was his prison; he preached in it afterwards, when France became his place of exile. Italian he also knew. But, true to his age and

vocation, he trusted most in his mother-tongue, finding room in it for subtle argument, grim humour, and weighty eloquence. His writing of it is like speaking, for clearness and force. He had his share in rendering the Scriptures into it, and took pleasure in hearing it well handled. Along with his hearer, Lyndsay, and the other Reformers, he helped to make it the language of our literature as well as of our religion.

He left college, for reasons unknown to us, without taking his degree. Though he completed his course for the priesthood, he never exercised it, unless in the half-lay, half-clerical capacity of notary, or ecclesiastical law-clerk. By this and by private teaching he probably supported himself for twenty years (c. 1524-1544). He is a man in his full prime before any one hears of him, before ever he utters a word or writes a line. Such a silence preceded such speech. It is the silence of the mountain-tarn, where the mist-fed waters are gathering and mantling, till they break a new mouth. It is the stillness of spring-fields, where the sap-nursed seeds grow to bursting, and burst into multiplied growth. Two things fill this silent time.

These were days, first of all, of severe study. To them we must look for that sustained volume of solid mental strength which bore him on through a life of unexampled activity ; to them, for that high pressure of intellectual power which supplied hereafter such a "copious flow of speech." How he gained access to books we cannot tell. Major may have pointed him to the Latins ; the Greeks he

must have known at first through translations. His works on the Regiment of Women and on Predestination, with other references elsewhere, bear witness to a wide and well-mastered reading. He has a student's hunger after originals. Mary thought more might have been made of him had he not been so "always at his book." What habits of diligent, thorough, and intelligent work he had formed, may be learned from his after-life. Careful and orderly reading and re-reading; painstaking research; prosecution of study in the midst of strenuous labours: these are marks of the true student. Quiet time to feed the mind was a constant craving with him. His French prison, like Bunyan's, became a study; and during the busiest years of his ministry, part of each day was devoted to the desk, although he never wrote a sermon beforehand.

Perhaps it was in the library of the abbey at Haddington that he laid his hands on the works of one of the Latin fathers. The times did not smile upon private research. About the time when Knox was leaving college (1525) Acts were passed against the bringing in or harbouring of foreign books. But a young Scots nobleman, Patrick Hamilton, Knox's senior by about a year, had been smitten with them abroad, in 1526, and brought the infection home with him. In two short years Knox heard that he had gone into the flames at St. Andrews. By the lurid glow that shot over broad Scotland from the stake there, and at Stirling, and here at Green-side and on the Castle-hill, the student read his Augustine with a new interest. The best converts

to the reformed cause were made in those ten years of killing-time. The forbidden writings of Luther never reached Knox that we know of. In common with Luther, he learned directly of Augustine and Paul.

But amid all this painstaking investigation and intellectual stir, came a still small voice, and with it a great and creative spiritual change. Out of a copy of Tyndale's New Testament perhaps, brought over the border under a merchant's cloak or bound up in the heart of bales of foreign merchandise, or out of the Vulgate, Knox read for himself the seventeenth chapter of John, and "cast" thereon "his first anchor." For him the one Priest's intercession availed; he accepted for himself the one Priest's sacrifice. With that there was an end to all belief in other sacrifices, whether of one's own merit or of the mass; in other intercessions, whether of virgin, saint, or angel.

It was Augustine, I think there can be no doubt, who first led Knox to the seventeenth of John. His observations on John xvii. 23, are just Augustine's. Through that passage, and the first two chapters of the Ephesians, he found rest in the doctrine of Divine electing love. For Knox predestination was no cold, cut-and-dry dogma. It came to him all full of life and meaning from the Person of Christ. "God hath predestinated me" meant "He hath made me dear by that Beloved;" "as God hath loved Him," thus he argues, "so hath He loved me, for I am one with Him." This truth laid hold of him by a threefold cord. He felt it to

be the one immovable ground for faith, the most powerful motive to a new and humble life, the greatest incentive to gratitude and love. From what source, he asked himself, did this proceed, this light he had received in the midst of such darkness, this sanctification in the midst of so much wickedness? Not from nature, conscience answered. Nature had made him a child of wrath, even as others. Not from education, reason, or his own study, experience replied. For many had been nursed in virtue, and yet become most filthy in life; and many had long remained without all virtuous education, and yet in the end attained to God's favour. The only source which remained was "that infinite benefit which exceedeth all measure," of "free grace and mere mercy."

What "singular comfort" came with "that solemn prayer" Knox can scarcely tell. Its "virtue," he feels, "is perpetual," and at that time and at all times "it obtains mercy for him in the presence of the Father's throne." He can but break out at the remembrance of it in this fashion: "Oh that our hearts could without contradiction embrace these words: for then with humility should we prostrate ourselves before our God, and with unfeigned tears give thanks for his mercy!" Those who have imagination may seek access to the student's closet or the tutor's room, which first witnessed these words embraced, that worshipper prostrate, those tears falling, those thanks outpoured. There he will see more than the conversion of an individual. He will witness the fresh communication of a truth which was to revolutionise, and still vivifies, the religion of our land.

CONVERSION

This conversion of Knox is well worthy of attention. What led a man of his years and in his situation to profess the reformed faith and embrace the reformed cause? Not youth with its fondness for new things; he is past middle life, when the final step is taken. Not impatience of so-called priestly vows; for ten years at least hereafter he is still an unmarried man. Not ambition; a career lay open to him as a man of learning; the prizes which Protestantism offered were—fagots and a stake. Not foreign influence or upbringing; he is home-bred and educated at home.

When, towards the close of these twenty years of silence, Knox again becomes distinctly visible, he is still a teacher, *tutor*, in the Scottish sense of the word, which is student and teacher in one. His pupils are two young Douglasses of Longniddry, and young Cockburn of Ormiston. The death of James v. (1542) has arrested the persecutions; and under the regency of Arran the Estates have lately met in Parliament and resolved that every one who will may read his Bible. So the lads' exercises include a public Bible-reading, in which household and villagers begin to join. The boys share what the master is learning. Knox takes them where he himself has been, to the Gospel of John. These were the days when the whole Scripture became his very life-blood. Is there not an echo of them in Knox's "Prayer to be said of the Child before he study his lesson?"

It was the appearance of Wishart in the county (1546) which brought Knox to decision. The gentle

WISHART

preacher was a guest at Longniddry and Ormiston. His sermons told on the tutor as well as on the lairds. Knox was wonderfully drawn toward him, and was debtor to him for more than Greek. He "awaited upon him carefully" at all his services, and saw in him what a power this public preaching of the Word was to be. The priest and notary became henceforth the "professor of the true evangel," "the simple (*i.e.* common) soldier" of Jesus Christ. When dangers thicken, all the old martial spirit of his yeomen ancestors is up in him, and he bears a sword before his threatened friend. On the night of betrayal Wishart, like Another, bade his attendant put up his weapon into its place. Let Knox go back "to his bairns." His time is not yet come. The man will be more than a tutor, thinks Wishart, before he dies.

Knox obeyed. He did not lift the sword against Wishart's murderer, though he thought it well it was lifted. But Beatoun's successor at once marked out Wishart's friend. From this hour to the end Knox was in deaths oft. The siege, the galleys, the French prisons, English Mary's spies, the plots and capital sentence of the Scottish bishops, and again of the Regent, Mary of Guise, the "twelve loaded haquebuts" of the Archbishop, the price set on his head, the threats of Queen Mary before her coming, his defencelessness in her presence, the charge of treason, Kircaldy's vow to have his life, the assassin's bullet: all these and other terrors were in store, but "none of these things moved him."

Knox's conspicuous connection with the martyr

unexpectedly led to his call to be Wishart's successor. He was forced to take refuge in the castle of St. Andrews (April 10, 1547), where the call came. The earliest reformed congregation—priests, statesmen, courtiers, common people, refugees from the persecuting clergy,—are met as brethren in Christ's name. John Knox sits with the rest among his pupils. From the public exercises of the lads, the worshippers think they have discerned no common gift in the tutor. Already Rough, a man of moderate learning, whom they have made minister, has enough to do to fill the pulpit, not to speak of meeting the Romanists of the College in debate. He too has recognised Knox's singular ability, and would it were put forth "to profit withal." In his sermon to-day he takes up the Reformed, the New Testament ground on this subject. In the body of believers, holding priesthood directly of the Head, resides the sole fountain of church power. This body corporate has a right over the gifts of its members. "In the name of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the name of all who presently call him," Rough offers John Knox "the public office and charge of preaching," and enjoins on him that he "refuse not this holy vocation, even as he looks to avoid God's heavy displeasure, and desires that He shall multiply His graces unto him." Turning to the congregation, he says, "Was not this your charge unto me, and do ye not approve this vocation?" They all answered, "It was; and we approve it." "Whereat the said John, abashed, burst forth in most abundant tears, and withdrew him to his chamber, . . . neither had

the pleasure to accompany any man, many days together."

This fineness of feeling is part of him, as of every chivalrous nature. It comes out strongly in his courtship, in his bearing towards his bride and her mother, towards his boys, and, in spite of all that has been said, towards his queen. It helps, too, to explain the close attachment men formed for him, and the warm language they held of him; why Bishop Bale, his opponent at Frankfort, addresses him as "brother best-beloved;" why Calvin's calm style cannot withhold the expression "heartily-cherished;" why Beza speaks of "that most perfect sympathy between us;" why strong men in the church at Geneva weep when he is taken from them; why the gentlemen of the West protest "his death and life are as dear to them as their own;" and citizens of sober Edinburgh will not sit still in their houses, while the house in High Street stands empty.

Feeling thus keenly, with fear and trembling, Knox yet accepted the call. It was a call, not to that charge only, but to be "the restorer of the Gospel of God in Scotland." He presented himself in the pulpit upon an early Sabbath to "prove the Roman Church this day degenerate in life, doctrine, and laws." His hearer, Lyndsay, whose works are a mirror of Scottish morals before the Reformation, has versed the sermon for us in his "fifth" or "papal monarchy." Among the first positive truths Knox proclaimed were, the sole Headship of Christ over His Church, the oneness of the office of the

bishop with that of the preacher, and the supreme authority of Scripture as the rule of worship.

Knox always looked back to this event as to his chief title to the ministry. Once and again he obeyed a similar call, at Frankfort, at Geneva, at Dieppe, and in Scotland. Of an ordination without jurisdiction he knew nothing; one's call to work could only come when there was a field before one. But once called by the church, he was henceforth the church's servant, her minister. He could find no place for the office of diocesan bishop in Scripture, and no place for it therefore in the church. The office of superintendent, wise as he thought it, and needful, in the circumstances of the country, he never filled. Your Town Council's name for him: "John Knox, minister," was enough. After having been settled in five kingdoms, he could say: "I never left any, except at their own commandment."

Like that of every true workman, the life of Knox went upon a well-considered plan. The Gospel had been intrusted to him: God had put him into the ministry. "Considering myself," he says of this time, "called of my God to instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful, confirm the weak, and rebuke the proud, by tongue and lively voice, I decreed to contain myself within the bounds of that vocation." It became his ruling passion to propagate the reformed doctrine. He "desired none other armour but God's holy Word, and the liberty of his tongue." Henceforward his pulpit was his world: he lived for his pulpit. Even the galley was a place to preach

from. When his lips were sealed he spoke, like Paul, by letter. Otherwise, he never wrote. We have but one sermon from his hand, and that was recalled perforce from memory. He preached in England for five years, Sabbath and week day, frequently every day, and for days after it was penal to do so. In exile he thirsts for this: "For a few sermons . . . to be made in England, my heart could be content to suffer more than nature were able to sustain." At Frankfort, let who will give the sacraments, *he* wishes to preach. Day and night at Edinburgh the diets succeed each other; in Angus they are held daily. Heretofore there had been a famine of the Word of God in these islands, as elsewhere; the Reformation was the return of plenty. Abroad, too, Knox preached: in France, at Rochelle and Dieppe; in Switzerland, at Geneva. He re-entered the pulpit of St. Andrews, according to his sure hope, and in two months evangelised Scotland south of the Grampians. Five sermons a week was his rule for the first two years of his ministry in St. Giles.

The Scriptures were his authorities: his commentaries were the times. On the one hand, the times "ratified and confirmed the truth of God's Word." "If there had never been testimonial of the undoubted truth thereof before these our ages," he asks, "may not such things as we see daily come to pass, prove the verity thereof?" On the other hand, Scripture interpreted the times. Hence Knox is never at a loss for a text. He must have preached and lectured through the better part of both Testa-

ments in the course of his ministry. At St. Andrews, in 1547, before the friends and foes of the Reformation, he is in Daniel and John; at London in 1553, before the proud and crafty counsellors of Edward VI., in John; at Frankfort, in 1555, before the disturbers of religious peace, in Genesis; at St. Andrews again, in June 1559, before the reforming lords, in John; at Stirling, in November, before the discouraged congregation, in the Psalms; at Edinburgh, in 1560, before the Parliament met to ratify the Reformed faith, in Haggai; at Edinburgh, in 1555, before the king, in Isaiah; at St. Andrews again, in 1571, before his enemies, in Daniel. He closes his ministry at Edinburgh—an old purpose—by lecturing through the Passion. His last sermon was to have been on the Resurrection.

In private, too, the Scriptures fill the largest place. Each day he reads some part of the Old and New Testament. The Psalter is overtaken every month. His letters are redolent of biblical reference: often they have a text for heading, or a prayer. In debate, his power of quotation is as swift as it is sure. To the latest hour he grew in understanding and enjoyment of the Word. His last anchor was cast, like his first, on the high-priestly prayer.

This it was which made him so staunch a champion of civil liberty. He “only craves audience,” but audience he must have. “Take from us the liberty of Assemblies, and take from us the Gospel.” Hence the jealousy with which he guarded the independence of the pulpit from the encroachment as well of the

university, as of the state. At the same time he had no greater joy than to hear of able and faithful preaching, in which lay his hope for church and land after him.

His ministry of five-and-twenty years was now begun ; but after some twelve weeks of preaching, on July 31, 1547, he and his friends had to surrender to the French fleet, and were carried to France, where, instead of the freedom promised them, they found the dungeons and the galleys. Scotland had not yet had enough of the priests and Guises. Twelve years of journeymanship thus intervened for Knox, followed by about as many of full work.

The first two years he is chained at the oar. On the Loire that winter, thanks to his courage, "the whole Scottishmen" sit with their caps on, while mass is said and *Salve Regina* sung. The "glorious painted lady" troubles them but once. She is "thrust to his face" and "put betwixt his hands." "Advisedly" he looks about, then "casts the idol in the river," saying, "Let our Lady save herself, she is light enough ; let her learn to swim." Next summer they are lying idle off Broughty. The French fleet can make nothing of the Castle. Knox's oar is still ; the hands of the rower are hot with fever ; his friends have given up hope. One of them points to St. Andrews, to see if the dying man knows where he is. In an instant the old fire rekindles. "Yes, I know it well ; for I see the steeple of that place where God first in public opened my mouth to His glory, and I am fully

persuaded, how weak that ever I now appear, that I shall not depart this life, till that my tongue shall glorify His godly name in that same place." His fevered hand writes that his prayer will be heard; and he recovers. The rough galley-captain is struck; and when he too is at his wits' end, comes to entreat the prisoner's prayers for his ship. All round Scotland he tugs at his stubborn task, a poor galley-slave, going who knows and who cares where. In another galley sports a little maid, born to beauty, wealth, and royalty, the eyes of three kingdoms on her. Which of the two beat out the longer and the better measure for the land?

Here began Knox's life-long thorn in the flesh. With Paul he felt that "the messenger of Satan" could but "buffet" him, "sting him" but "upon the heel." But it was a sharp sting. He had the sentence of death in himself, that he should not trust in himself, but in God, which raiseth the dead. He "drank, before the maturity of age, the bitter cup of corporal death, that thereby he might receive medicine and cure from all infirmity." "Trouble and fear" were "very spurs to prayer." They drew forth that Treatise on Prayer, or "earnest and familiar talking with God," which breathes the "glory-in-suffering" of the Second Corinthians. He acted it out to the end; though he can never quite forgive the "wicked carcass," as he grimly calls it. In England these are his constant experiences: "daily I find my body decay;" "a most dolorous night;" "I am . . . of mind . . . that my pain shall have no end in this life." At

Geneva he is so ill that his wife must write for him. In Scotland again: "the fevers have vexed me;" and again, "torturing fever." He is taken "from bed" in the day-time to appear before the Privy Council. During his last seven years, his desires for release are as pathetic as his labours for the church are heroic. The light burned ever in an earthen vessel. "A frail and feeble bit of a body," a friend calls it; though when it spoke the words were weighty and powerful. "A poor dried-up little man," you would say of him, as Luther said of Melanchthon, when he was not speaking; or as Antenor of Ulysses, "You might think little enough of him when he was silent; but when he spoke, it was a perfect snowstorm." Though the knife and the bullet missed him, Knox did not want for martyrdoms.

On his release, ten years of wandering-time still lay before him. England and Switzerland divided them. The Reformation had taken its full form in both countries, ere ours was fully begun. Knox knew and learned much of both; but of both he was independent. Many of the Reformers came to the light, and had their religious views formed, abroad. Knox received his great impulse, and had his first call to work, before ever he left home.

At first he laboured within sight of his own land. So powerful was the rumour of those few weeks' preaching at St. Andrews, that Edward's English Council at once welcomed him, and sent him to preach in the least reformed and least loyal part of the kingdom. Two years (1549-51) Berwick heard

him, and the northern border. Among his hearers was his future wife. At Newcastle he defended his thesis that the mass is idolatry, before the clergy and council of the North. In England, too, he might have remained. The see of Rochester was offered him. But more than preacher in the present state of the English Church Knox could not be. King's preacher, however, they made him. As royal chaplain he preached over England, North and South, for two years. The evangelist had more influence than the prelate. Cranmer consulted him on the Prayer-book and the Articles. He pleaded and preached as boldly before the English King and Council as ever he did in Scotland. To him are due those words in the English communion-service which guard the spiritual nature of the ordinance. In these days, too, he was the first to restore the supper-table to the place in the church which it retains among us to this day.

His English residence taught Knox the need for thoroughness in reforming the church. He saw at once the danger which lay in leaving anything, either of its government or worship, which encouraged or shielded radical misconceptions as to the doctrines of grace. Above all, in the English Reformers he beheld men, his equals in earnestness and his allies in doctrine, constantly counterworked in their efforts by the fact that the Crown had been allowed to become the pivot upon which the religious future of the country was to turn. The interests of religion must walk at the wheels of the state.

He foresaw the cloud which hung over England

on Edward's death. He read the English Mary's character from the first, as truly as that of the other two; but while he warned London from the pulpit of the coming storm, he did not instantly run for shelter. He continued throughout the year to stir up the people all over the land to prayer and loyalty. Attempts were made to entrap him. Only his friends' compulsion led him to quit the country. To his other sorrows at the time was added this, that Marjory Bowes, his betrothed, must remain behind.

Then follow days of wandering in France and Switzerland, days of severe self-scrutiny as to his past ministry, of eager observation of affairs in England and Scotland, of busy correspondence with friends and hearers in both countries. His affection for his converts is wonderful. Like the apostle, he declares they are his glorying, his longing, his joy and crown. He lives if they stand fast; he has sorrow upon sorrow if they fall away. "Their spiritual life," he says, "is to my heart more dear than all the glory, riches, and honour in earth." His interest in these English hearers, both at home and abroad, never ceased. He "must needs visit that little flock" of them in Switzerland. He would fain return from thence by Newcastle and Berwick. But here, as everywhere, Scotland has the first place in his heart. "My own motion and daily prayer is, not only that I may visit you, but also that with joy I may end my battle among you."

Writing, we have observed, was "contrarious" to him, from habit of mind as well as body. But when "tongue and lively voice" were silenced, he took up

his pen to "instruct, comfort, confirm, rebuke," those among whom he had ministered. The years of exile may be called the epistolary period of his life. He makes stated pilgrimages from Geneva to Dieppe, in order to despatch and receive letters. Omitting his "History of the Reformation," we know Knox better from these than from any other source. "Infinite letters," one calls them. Among them we meet pieces of suggestive exposition, drawn from the life; heart-stirring battle-calls to steadfastness under trial; outspoken denunciation of the persecutor; persuasive advocacy of the reformed cause; wise practical advice upon worship and on difficult passages of Scripture; sharp and searching condemnation of cowardice; inspiring appeals to the various ranks of the community; sober warnings against fanaticism and rebellion. From his gift in this department, the Assembly once and again employed him upon its pastoral letters. He wrote for it on the sustentation of ministers; on discipline; on fasting, and so forth. More than once his bold and trenchant pen aroused and saved the church.

During these days of wandering he was gathering knowledge against the day of his work. He "travelled through all the congregations of Switzerland," reasoning with their ministers and men of learning on the more difficult points raised in the Reformation. Geneva offered him a retreat for study, and the friendship of the theologian of the Reformation. He must have put his Hebrew to its first use in hearing his friend's lectures on the Old Testament. His brief ministry over the English exiles at Frank-

fort (Nov. 1554—March 1555) repeated the lessons of England. His Genevan ministry over those who followed him there, was about the happiest time in his life. Now he saw a church "sincerely reformed."

1555
Meantime (August 1555—July 1556) Knox paid a preparatory visit to Scotland. A pause had come in the Scottish persecutions. After five years of beheading, burning, outlawing, and book-prohibiting, Protestantism was breathing again. Mary of Guise, as a candidate for the regency of Scotland, had to pay court to the Protestants, while, as a princess of France, she was at issue with their sworn enemy, Mary of England, the ally of Spain. Hence exiled preachers had begun to recross the border. Willock, the chief of them, arrived on a mission from abroad. Knox learned this from his Berwick friends, who entreated him to return. He came, intending a quiet survey. But at Edinburgh it was noised abroad that he was in the house of one of the citizens, Mr. James Syme, and hither the friends of truth and liberty came, and heard, and said to each other that their leader had come. They gathered from north and west, from Ayr and from Angus, one bringing another. When one congregation left the room, another stood at the door. There were also that came by night. They are a quiet people the Scotch, nevertheless they can be moved; and not once or twice has religion moved them, as it never moves light minds. Even Knox, with all his fervour, is surprised on emerging from the study and the translator's table at Geneva into this society of strong men—Erskine, Sandilands, and the rest—

"night and day sobbing and groaning for the bread of life." "If I had not seen it with my own eyes," he says, "in my own country, I could not have believed it." His English hearers had not been wanting in earnestness. "But the fervency here doth far exceed all others that I have seen. . . . Depart I cannot until such time as God quench their thirst a little. . . . Their fervency doth so ravish me, that I cannot but accuse and condemn my slothful coldness. God grant them their heart's desire." ["The trumpet blew the old sound for days together." "The Bugle," as one calls him, had begun to blow.]

There were few days that winter and the summer following, which did not witness similar scenes in the houses of the gentlemen of Angus and Midlothian, of Ayr and Argyll. There, too, after Knox was gone, weekly "assemblies" of brethren still went on for confession of sins, "conference of Scriptures," and "common prayers for such things as the Spirit of the Lord Jesus shall teach . . . to be profitable." Other teacher than that Spirit they had none. And there, and in many a simple home beside, began, at Knox's instance also, the practice of family worship, which has ever since been a note of Scottish piety. "Within their own homes . . . they were bishops and kings, and their wives, children, and families were their bishopric and charge." Already the Psalms were beginning to be sung. The 100th and 124th, words and tune, have come down to us almost unchanged through three centuries. Already, by daily reading, Scottish households were

beginning to hear "that harmony and well-tuned song of the Holy Spirit speaking in our fathers from the beginning."

What, then, was this message which so moved Scotland to the core? The "evangel," as John Knox loves to call it, keeping near the nervous original. "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." "There is one . . . mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "He died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them." "He that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God." Such were Knox's texts; such his themes.

On the last of them he dwelt with peculiar force and effect. It was his great work on this preparatory visit to impress on his countrymen the duty of publicly professing the reformed faith. To him Protestantism was nothing if not a national cause. This one hope upheld him on the galley, that "that same word should openly be proclaimed in that same country;" this one desire, "that the confession of our faith should come plainly to light;" this one prayer, "Grant that we may confess with voice and tongue the same before thy congregation." This is his challenge to England, "Let it be known to your posterity that ye were Christians;" and to Scotland, "Neither yet may ye do this so quietly, that ye will

admit no witnesses." He asked this of his first hearers when the Lord's Supper was celebrated among them. This is his name for the congregation in the castle, "The professors of Christ's true evangel." His words took practical shape when the gentlemen of Mearns, after sitting down together at the communion-table, entered into a solemn league to promote the preaching of the Gospel as opportunity offered. It was among the first applications of a principle which Knox asserted from the beginning, and for which he contended throughout—the right of subjects to convene, and to combine, for purposes within the law. On the same principle the Lords acted in openly furthering the Reformation, each within his own jurisdiction, when the Regent refused to act as her people's representative. This was the first Covenant in Scotland: it was not the last.

At the bidding of his English congregation, Knox returned for a time to Geneva. He always obeyed the larger call. But he only waited till the hour should strike, and a public summons reach him from his native land. What pen could do in the meantime, he did, to prepare the way, striving to arouse and excite each separate class and every individual of the community, by the noblest motives and to the noblest ends. He placed before each in turn the ideal of his station. To the monarch, while he frankly owned her clemency, he earnestly appealed for moderation, and fearlessly asserted her responsibility. To the nobles, he magnified their office, owning them the hereditary guardians of the

national liberties, warning them against unjustifiable resistance, yet proclaiming the obligation which attached to their influence "to vindicate and deliver their subjects and brethren." To the commons, he held up their individual birthright and bounden duty. Each had reason given him to resolve the question at issue; each had conscience to account for his answer.

Inspired by these addresses, the Scottish nobles and commons carried on in his absence the work of reformation. Quietly the people gathered in congregations, and appointed them elders and deacons. The nobility privately offered the asylum and audience of their houses to those priests who embraced the reformed faith: publicly they petitioned for liberty of worship in the vulgar tongue. The Regent, however, having secured her ends by their means, now withdrew her protection, and openly re-espoused the cause of Rome. The overthrow of Scottish Protestantism was but one step in the grand French project which was to place Mary of Scots, heiress-apparent of France, upon the throne of Britain. Once more the fires were lit at St. Andrews. But the burning of old Walter Mill kindled once and for all the beacon of the Reformation. It drew the people from their homes, the preachers from their hiding, the lords from their half-measures, to stand out together in broad daylight, in the presence of the Regent, the hierarchy, the whole nation. It was seen to be all one battle now, for the life of the body and of the soul. The right of every Christian man to stand free for him-

self before his God had become the right of each to stand free for himself before his fellows and his king. The Lords had already made a fresh covenant among themselves; they invited Knox to be their covenanted leader. "If the civil power will not favour the Church," he writes to them, "it is their duty themselves to provide . . . that Christ's evangel may be truly preached, and his holy sacraments rightly ministered." On this ground they stood, and on it they summoned him to help them.

On his landing at Leith (May 2, 1559), Providence had prepared another summons, and placed it in his hands. Four ministers stood cited to appear at Stirling in a day or two, and answer for their preaching and administration of the supper. A fifth, unlooked for, came. Hearing of his arrival in Edinburgh, the last provincial council of clergy, met afresh to ratify the Romish faith and excommunicate the Reformed, instantly broke up in confusion. Proclaimed, at their instance, an outlaw and a rebel, Knox still pressed on, and, joining at Dundee the assembled Congregation, preached before them and proceeded with them on their way to the place of trial. The Regent's engagement to stay proceedings arrested their progress at Perth. Her perfidy in resuming them and in condemning the accused unheard brought matters to a crisis. The regularly constituted authority had proved utterly unreliable. The Perth riot, an accidental result of Knox's preaching, seemed for a moment to replace the Regent in the right. But her renewed breach of faith in quartering troops in the town and molesting the

friends of the Reformation, whom she had amnestied until a meeting of Parliament, forced the Reformers to act for and defend themselves. The Regent had not only failed, she had deliberately assailed, the reformed cause: themselves must reform or none.

But what call for reformation? A hierarchy, subjects of a foreign power, possessed of half the national wealth and of the highest places in the state, living in acknowledged ignorance of the revelation they safeguarded, and in open violation of the vows they had taken; religious foundations, raised to piety and learning, grown as guiltless of letters as of godliness, mothers of indolence and of evil lives; a priesthood, unable to preach, reciters of an unintelligible service, and celebrators of an incredible sacrifice, selling the blessings and the maledictions of heaven to the rich, and tearing the last garment from the poor; houses of God, devoid of the Divine message, echoing only to ribaldry, to traffic, or to crime; a society, the language and manners of whose leading spirits as well as its common members, had become careless of the ordinary rules of morals—such is the burden of Scotland before the Reformation.

Knox had seen to the bitter heart of the evil long since. On the human side the chief factor in the Reformation was the sense of the intolerable burden, the curse, of unremoved sin. The hour for proclaiming its removal had come. God's house must first be cleansed. Clothed with his Master's indignation and burning with his Master's grief, Knox stood up, bare of other assistance, in the Cathedral

June 11
1559

of St. Andrews, on Sabbath, June 11, 1559, to speak the first word and do the great deed of his ministry as a Reformer. "Take these things hence" was his text, altars, images, vestments, missals, attitudes,—all that impairs or imperils the birth-right of every believing man to approach for himself, through Christ, the Father in heaven. Let this house of merchandise be, what it is, the house of free grace. His words met with an immediate response. Magistrates and people united to restore the church primitive within their bounds. In a week or two a similar answer was returned by the principal towns in Scotland.

Religion and politics were then so closely connected that the religious feeling of the country must needs give itself a direct political expression. Much against his will, Knox had to take his share in State work, since there was no one else to do it. The notary's hand was needed to draw documents. To only one equivocal counsel can the unsparing finger of history point. When others were raised up, he gladly left diplomacy to them. He had no "mind to meddle with policy, further than it had religion mixed with it." "We desire no other thing," said he and his fellows to the Regent, . . . "but the liberty of our conscience, to serve our Lord God as we shall answer to Him." French troops and repeated perfidy were her only reply. Hence upon Cupar Muir, at the siege of Perth, at the armed entry to Edinburgh, Knox was forced to appear as one of the champions of popular liberty against a foreign tyranny. From the first he had

seen that in an alliance with England lay the only road to a true and lasting Scottish independence, civil as well as spiritual. He had worked for this end during his English ministry. On Elizabeth's accession, he had pressed the matter upon her advisers. As virtual ambassador of the Congregation he continued to urge it by letter and interview, and at length his counsels prevailed. But long ere this, he boldly advocated the suspension of the Regent by the nobles and representatives of the people, upon the ground of her despotic acts. Her death and the intervention of Elizabeth set Scotland free, for a moment, to order her own affairs. So our *Magna Charta* and our *Praemunire* came to us almost in one day. Papal supremacy and absolute monarchy went to the ground together. The parliament which ratified the reformed faith simply sanctioned what the majority of the nation had already done. It was itself, in consequence, national and representative as no Scottish parliament had been. It was the people themselves who petitioned for the repudiation of unscriptural doctrine, the restoration of pure worship and discipline, and the application of church-funds to the maintenance of the ministry, learning, and the poor. It was a layman who gave voice to the loud outcry of the land, heart-sick of its priests' and of its people's sin. It was another layman who wrote the first reformed text-book, on Justification, or, as he calls it, "the refuge of a troubled man at his God," meaning that blessed sense of relief which comes with the received righteousness of Christ. Laymen and ministers together drew up the First

Confession of Faith, and challenged their countrymen in parliament to judge of it, each for himself, by the light of God's Word.

To that Word, interpreted by the same Spirit which spake it, lay their last appeal. It carried its divine authority in its own bosom. "They heard and obeyed in it the voice of their Shepherd." By it, by the preaching of it, by the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of discipline in accordance with it, could the true church alone be discerned. "And such kirks," in particular, say they, "we, the inhabitants of the realm of Scotland, professors of Christ Jesus, confess us to have in our cities, towns, and places reformed; for the doctrine taught in our kirks is contained in the written Word of God, to wit, in the books of the Old and New Testament."

Therefore these confessors breathe the doctrines of grace like native air. "By . . . original sin," they begin, "was the image of God utterly defaced in man; and he and his posterity of nature became enemies to God, slaves to Satan, and servants to sin." "All our salvation springs from and depends" on "the eternal and immutable decree of God, . . . who of mere mercy elected us in Christ Jesus, His Son, before the foundation of the world." "Our nature is so corrupt, so weak, and so imperfect, that we are never able to fulfil the works of the law in perfection. . . . Therefore it behoves us to apprehend Christ Jesus, with his justice and satisfaction, who is the end and accomplishment of the law." "The Holy Spirit doth sanctify and regenerate us without all respect of any merit proceeding from us." "The

cause of good works we confess to be, not our free will, but the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who, dwelling in our hearts by true faith, brings forth such good works as God has prepared for us to walk in." Such was the Evangel received by the people, and ratified, with but three dissentient voices, by the Estates of Scotland on August 17, 1560.

But while Knox laboured for, and rejoiced in this decision of Parliament as the expressed mind of the Scottish nation, he never regarded this as the heart of the matter in hand. "We beg not of them," he writes of the presentation of this settlement before Francis and Mary, "we beg not of them strength to our religion, which from God hath full power, and needeth not the suffrage of man." Throughout the entire year during which the congregation was in arms his most strenuous labours were still devoted to preaching. In his prayers the first place is given to "the furtherance of the evangel," the next to the weal of the realm. "At midnight" is the date of his state correspondence; the date of his sermons might be "all and every day." "The thirst of the poor people, as well as of the nobility," was indeed "wondrous great." How was it to be permanently satisfied?

All the time he was acting as a politician, this was the chief problem before him. The great task was the internal organisation of the church. He left his lasting impress on it in the First Book of Discipline. In it he asked that Christ's "Evangel be truly and openly preached in every kirk of this realm," and thereto "his holy sacraments be annexed and truly

ministered, as seals and visible confirmations of the spiritual promises contained in the Word." For purposes of public worship, his "Order of Geneva" was recommended as a guide, but never imposed as a rule. As the prospects of civil liberty improved, numbers of the leading men in the religious houses, churches, and schools came over to the reformed cause. How should they be admitted? None ought to preach, was the reply, or administer the sacraments, till he was "orderly called." Admission must consist "in consent of the people, and in approbation of the learned ministers appointed for their examination." Knox had seen in England the evil of continuing ignorant and unexamined men in a reformed church. Rather than this, the most part of our churches were content to wait for a time without ministers. To them meantime were appointed "the most apt men that could distinctly read the common prayers and the Scriptures." These were encouraged, however, to go on to "persuade by wholesome doctrine," and to extemporise. Certain ministers and elders, "endowed with singular graces," were freed from particular charges and set apart by their brethren, to travel from place to place in a given district, and, subject to their correction, to plant churches, see ministers chosen, as they themselves had been, elders and deacons elected, the poor provided for, the youth instructed, and discipline exercised. Each congregation so planted was self-governing. Each was equally represented in the provincial synod, and all in the general assembly. Three centuries have not exhausted the fertility of that organism. These

three hundred years has the Christianity of the land come up hither in its tribes: the tribes of the Lord have come hither. The first meeting of assembly reflected both the temporary state of the church and its permanent constitution. Six-sevenths of its members were elders. Knox and the superintendent ministers sat with them side by side. Seven times they sat and did the church's work, without the semblance even of a president. So really did they feel themselves to be the body of Christ; so truly did they hold the Head. Knox was a member of assembly throughout almost all the next twelve years. Henceforth he never acted apart from it. For more than half of this period the Church was unrecognised by the State. Yet all the while she was being organised on her own ground. "They had neither law nor parliament for their religion," said some. "We have the authority of God for it," was Knox's answer. So congregations, sessions, synods were all set in harmonious motion upwards toward the Supreme Court. When, in 1567, the mutual alliance between Church and State took place, Knox was one of those appointed to define the powers and privileges which the church held in her own right. Among other things he and his brethren named these: "judgment of doctrine, administration of divine ordinances, election, admission, suspension, etc., of ministers, and all cases of discipline." The last time he rose in the House was to defend its constitution against the encroachment of State-made bishops.

Scarcely however had this goodly house of our civil and spiritual liberties begun to rise when it was

threatened with complete overthrow. Knox was suddenly called to stand for it, and for us, in the presence of his Queen.

The little girl in the galley of thirteen years ago was now the accomplished woman of the gayest and most corrupt court in Europe, the widow of the king of France, the one priceless piece to be played in the great Guise game for Pope and empire.

She arrived, invited by Knox with the rest of the subjects in the realm, in August 1561. It was her mission to "restore the ancient religion." With youthful daring she at once singled out the protagonist of the reformed cause, and with veteran skill engaged him in debate. The Queen of Scots sat throned in a glory of youth, brilliance, and beauty. The minister of St. Giles' stood with his feet on the bare ground. At first she encountered him upon political lines. He had raised his countrymen, her subjects, he had led the Congregation, against the Regent and herself. He had written a book in prejudice of her authority. He had fomented rebellion in England. Knox could answer her charge of Scottish sedition by appealing to the conspicuous loyalty which had welcomed her: his conduct in England was open to the world; at Berwick the fierce fighting-men had been hushed by his ministry. To his work against the rule of women he stood fast; only observing that it had not been aimed at her Majesty; nor had he ever mooted the point upon Scottish soil. Repelled upon this side, the Queen raised the directly religious issue. He taught her subjects a religion different from that allowed by

their prince. The reply was ready: that true religion did not derive its authority from princes, but from God. Nay, if rulers exceeded their bounds and sought to murder the children of God, resistance might be the truest obedience. Mary rejoined: that this made her subjects her superiors. Nay, was the response; but both are equally subject unto God. As a minister of the church, Knox urged, he had this duty to the state, to see that rulers and ruled should obey Him. But the Head of the State had also a duty to the Church. Not to *his* church, however, the Queen at once returned; she would defend the church of Rome; it was, she thought, the true church of God. Her will and thought, was Knox's answer, did not decide the question. He was prepared to prove that church more degenerate now from apostolic purity, than the Jewish Church from the purity of Moses, when it crucified the Son of God. "My conscience is not so," said the Queen. "Conscience requires knowledge." "But I have heard and read." So had the Jews their Scriptures, and heard them interpreted too in their own way. Had the Queen heard any teach but they who were bound to support their own side? "You interpret in one way, they in another: whom shall I believe? who shall be judge?" "You shall believe God, who plainly speaketh in His word; and further than the word teacheth, you shall believe neither of us. The word of God is plain in itself; if there be any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost, who is never contrary to Himself, explains the same more clearly in other places." Knox was proceeding to take up

one of the points in question, the doctrine that the mass is a propitiatory sacrifice, when the Queen interposed. She could not contend with him in argument; but had she those present whom she had heard, they would answer him. "Would to God," Knox broke in, like Paul before Agrippa, clothing a cold admission with all the warmth of his own enthusiasm, "would to God her Grace had the most learned and trusty of her teachers by, and would hear them argue the matter to the end." For then, he doubted not, she would learn how little ground had her religion in His Word. Like Paul, too, Knox's last word was a kindly wish: "I pray God, madam, that you may be as blessed within the commonwealth of Scotland, as ever Deborah was in the commonwealth of Israel."

What were the preacher's words when he "knocked so hastily upon the Queen's heart" that she was moved to tears, we do not know. He gave her his Evangel doubtless, as he gave it to others. As he had given it to William Knox, the sea-captain, and to Edward the young king; to the rough Berwick soldier, and the gentle Berwick bride; so he gave it to Mary his Queen. But he left the royal presence convinced that this was stony ground. The Protestant hopes, the Catholic fears, for her conversion, he never shared. From that day "the court was dead to him and he to it." He spoke of it, indeed, sharply enough at times, from the pulpit. But when her Majesty gave a ball because her uncles had shot down a congregation of French worshippers; and when again she proceeded to initiate their policy in Scotland by setting aside the Parliament of 1560,

and entering upon a Roman Catholic marriage, was it not high time to speak? Did not both "his vocation and his conscience require plainness of him"? He revisited Holyrood once and again, at command, to answer for himself and for the liberties of the church and the nation. But he had no place there, and henceforward sought none. His place was in St. Giles'. There he preached to the courtiers when they came, to the parliament so often as it assembled, but week in, week out, for two years without interruption, to the people of Edinburgh. The heart of Midlothian was his congregation. In them he found his Philippians, the church which never failed him. The magistrates call him "their minister." In the liberality of the burgesses he trusted more safely than in the subsidies of the State. Every day he works for them in that "warm study of dailles, within his house, above the hall of the same, with light and windows thereunto, and all other necessities," which they have provided him. Every week he sits in session with the leading citizens. They grieve together over the city's sins and sorrows; they work together for its good. Weekly, too, he meets with the neighbouring ministers and elders for the Bible-reading, which is to become the presbytery; sometimes he leads, sometimes listens. He is never absent from the city, save by the command of the Assembly, or the inhibition of the Council. They would serve themselves his true successors who should help to make religion and morality in High Street and Canongate more what they were in the days of their first minister.

Throughout the entire course of the Queen's efforts for the next five years to undermine our civil and religious liberties, one man, and one only, remained unshaken, incorrupt, impregnable :

“Unus homo nobis *perstando* restituit rem.”

The glamour of the Guise and Stuart in Mary's eyes fascinated all but one. Maitland at once fulfilled his own prophecy of “the danger of temporising.” Murray and his brother-lords were blinded ere long. Knox's best friends, Spens and Maxwell, thought him needlessly alarmed and outspoken. The “multitude cried treason ;” but he paid no heed. He was accused of vehemence and imperiousness ; still he held on. The ministers shifted ground ; this man never. Every one of the superintendents in turn gave way. Erskine could be disarmed, Winram yield, Spotswood, Willock, and Carswell in turn conform. St. Giles' spoke but one language, and spoke on. Knox proclaimed the Queen's fixed purpose from the first. He foretold the nobles of their threatening defection. He gave warning of the brewing storms in France. When Huntly rose, he roused the country. When the Estates were hoodwinked, he sounded the alarm. Once and again he pointed out whither the royal marriage must tend. When the right of public meeting was threatened, he blew abroad a solitary blast, but one which has been “prodigal of echoes.” He sent news across Scotland of the Decree of Trent and the Catholic League for the extirpation of the Protestant name, a month before Mary set her seal to it. When the

hierarchy was restored by Act of Parliament, he again sent word over the land. Amid the blank horror that followed the crime of the Kirk of Field, he called unhesitatingly for a personal indictment, and a public trial. If Knox at each or any of these crises had yielded, where would the Scottish history of the last three hundred years have been? If Mary had listened, where might she not have been in it, ay, where might it not by this time have been?

On the other hand, every shaft in the Queen's full quiver was let fly at him. By threat of punishment, by persuasion of argument, by force of concession, by mingled earnestness and banter, by gravity and familiarity, by indignation and grief, by derisive laughter and hysterical tears, she assailed him; but in vain. Once after her marriage, and once only, was he sent for, when she wrung from him the prophecy of her wedded sorrows. Thereafter Mary saw him no more. He was forbidden to preach so long as she was in the city. Not many days after the minister's lips were sealed, came the murder of Rizzio. But it was not until Knox was got out of Edinburgh, ay, out of Scotland, that there fell the fatal night of Darnley's murder. In these long fifteen years that she outlived him, had the captive Queen of Scots no memories of the one man on earth who had never misread her, never spoken her but true?

The year 1567-8 was Knox's best year, for it was Scotland's happiest. Returning from a six months' visit to England, he preached at the coronation of the baby-king. He sat on the "committee of overtures" for the coming parliament, and delivered the

opening sermon. Some of the measures which were proposed anticipated history by centuries; some which were carried created history for an even longer period, and are still creating it. As one opens our Scottish Statute-book, there is a strange break just at this point, where, in among all the chequered Acts which mark our upward progress as a people, come twenty pages of strong, simple biblical statement, never perhaps better stated before or since: where, bound in with the law, one meets "the Evangel;" and under the large letters of KING JAMES the SIXTH, this name of Another King, one "CHRIST JESUS," who is called "the only Head of his Kirk." There too for the first time there is a description, surely from Knox's hand, of something not altogether antiquated yet; "the only true and holy Kirk of JESUS CHRIST within this realm," being "the ministers of the blessed Evangel, whom God of his mercy has now raised up among us, or hereafter shall raise, agreeing with then that now live in doctrine and administration of sacraments, and the people of this realm, that profess Christ, as He now is offered in His Evangel, and do communicate with the holy sacraments." There too, by Knox's diligence, the marches are ridden between the two jurisdictions once for all, when it is asserted "that the examination and admission of ministers within this realm be only in the power of the Kirk;" and "that in case the (laic) patron (left by the act in his old position) present . . . and the Superintendent refuse to admit, it be lawful to the patron to appeal to the Synod, and if they refuse, to the General

Assembly, by whom the cause being decided, shall take end."

The master's hand also is in the Act for the reform of schools, universities, and colleges, which intrusts the trial of all who "have charge and cure thereof," to the superintendents or visitors of the kirk; and in that for the maintenance of the higher learning, which directs that Patrons of Provostries, or Prebendaries of Colleges, may present the same to Bursars to study virtue and letters at any of the universities.

Verily this was freedom's seed-time in the land. Tear these early pages out of the story of our nation, and how many of the last leaves will remain? Remove the "liberty of the evangel," and where will you look for those later achievements of liberty?—the efforts and the prize of each of the thousand simple Scotsmen who has since pressed upward through the open gates of our graded school-system—the battles and the triumph of British civil liberty a century later—the conflicts and the victories of spiritual freedom in two centuries later still—ay, even the struggles for freedom to win this world's wealth, now near a century old, and the best fruit of these the liberality, the liberty we are only learning, of giving wealth away? Take them together, these grand deeds of gift granted in our own day, the grander deeds of Demission done in our fathers' and forefathers' day, the Wealth of Nations, *Lex Rex*, the Book of Discipline in all its editions down to that which is in the making to-day, will they not all bind well into one volume with that first Confession of our Scottish faith?

If one must describe, then, the head and front of all Knox's contendings from first to last in one single word, it would be the word Independence. Independence of the individual before his fellows, born of a common responsibility to God; independence of the subject before his king, born of a divine duty laid alike upon subject and king; independence of the church before the state, born of a distinct obligation imposed on church and state: independence of the worshipper before sacred places, service-books, and so forth, born of the imperative command to worship in spirit and in truth; independence of the searcher of Scripture before all authorities and interpreters, born of the summons to every soul to hear God's voice for himself.

The parliament of 1567, with its accomplishments and its forecasts, was Knox's Pisgah. He never possessed the land; twelve generations since have not possessed it. The Book of Discipline was his Deuteronomy, destined, by the law of degeneracy, to a but partial observance and a long neglect. The ears he harvested were, many of them, mummy-corn, not to fertilise for years. They slept in his dead hand.

The rising of Mary's friends, Murray's assassination, the open defection of Maitland and Kircaldy, once more made the pulpit of St. Giles' the post of duty, for it was the place of danger. The foul breath of slander blew up the old flame. The preacher was charged in turn with treason to King James, insolence to Mary, and disloyalty to his own land. His life was threatened by Kircaldy and

others of the Queen's party. Weakened by a stroke of apoplexy, he still spoke out and on, in pulpit and assembly, on behalf of liberty, the law, and the land. Only the citizens' urgent representation that blood would shortly be spilt in his defence, persuaded him to quit the city. One of the last sentences he ever uttered in St. Giles' was this: "One thing in the end I may not pretermitt, that is, to give him a lie in his throat that either dare or will say that ever I sought support against my native country. What I have been to my country, albeit this unthankful age will not know, yet the ages to come will be compelled to bear witness to the truth. And thus I cease, requiring of every man that has to oppose anything against me, that he will do it so plainly as I make myself and all my doings manifest to the world."

At St. Andrews he continued his testimony on behalf of church and country. He writes to the Assembly warning it against the intrusion of tulchan bishops. Just two years before he had received Beza's congratulations upon the banishment of the episcopal order from the Scottish Church. He protests in the cathedral against its re-introduction, as contrary to the distinct statements of the Book of Discipline. He "opposed himself directly to the making of bishops." At the same time he publicly inveighs against the murderers of Darnley and Murray. Weak as he is in these days, "weary of the world" and "thirsting to depart," his is still the desire of Idomeneus, "to be with all speed in the thick of the battle." James Melville can witness that he has more than Nestor's strength; for his old

"limbs still keep pace with the ardour of his mind." He will not return hither to die among us, if his lips are to be sealed. Before long he has a loud call to open them. The day he recrossed the Forth was the eve of the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

For two months you may still see him, going up and down the High Street there, from "the warm study of dailies" to the Tolbooth, the smaller church which, with his accustomed sense, he has asked the session to have fitted up for him. There it is, the "frail bit of a body," below middle height; the oval face, surmounted by a skull-cap, from which the white hair escapes in a lock on either side, and set in a "furring of martriks" round about, with which the grey beard mingles below; a staff in the one hand, and in the other, "holden up by good, godly Richard Ballanden," his own Genevan Bible. The face is sadly thin with toil, fever, and sorrow. But when the eye looks up, there are such strange struggling lights in it. So penetrating, piercing it is, before all, seeing straight to the bottom of things at first sight, not to be escaped, got quit of, or deceived. It has looked through many, through three Marys among others, that eye. And yet so pathetic, liquid, mute; charged with an infinite tenderness, that eye. It has yearned over many too, over Wishart, over his brother William, over Marjory Bowes and her mother, over young king Edward, over poor Kircaldy, that eye. The mouth too has this double expression about it, so full of sympathy the lower lip, the upper so filled with grim humour, humour not the sort that simpers, but the kind that can cut like a surgical instrument.

There is the same contrast in his preaching: simple, direct, "moderate" statement, convincing, commending itself; yet withal outbursts of fervid, impassioned, unconfined emotion, catching you, carrying you away.

You can visit him for a fortnight longer (from the 9th of this month onward) at the house in High Street. "John Knox," he tells you, "is the same man now when he is about to die, that ever one knew him when able in body." He has calmly "taken his good-night of all causes worldly," and "of all the faithful in both realms," seen his flock comfortably settled under Mr. James Lawson (who gathered the first stones for our reformed College of Edinburgh), and now goes up into his chamber to die. They can call the physicians, he says; he does not despise the ordinary means; but he knows this is the end. It is a touching little circle which surrounds the bed. Young Margaret Stewart watches over him as tenderly as ever Marjory Bowes did at Geneva, reading aloud constantly "in a distinct voice" to him (unless when Richard Ballanden has the book) from his favourite Ephesians, and those words where he first found rest in the seventeenth chapter of John. So peaceful he looks, and lies so still, once and again they think him sleeping; but when they inquire, there is ever one answer: "Thank God, I hear, and understand far better." His ejaculations are a witness to this: echoes of the highest and most intimate Scriptures; outbursts of personal prayer to Christ; strong, but at times triumphant, cryings for church and common-

wealth. It almost seems something new, this death-bed of a saint, not in his cell, or church, or at the stake, but here in the midst of his friends, in his family, with little children about him in the room—it takes one back fifteen centuries at a bound to the death of another, his namesake, his own Evangelist, to John's. One cannot but think of another death-bed, about a century later, at St. Andrews, and of others since.

But the servants must come in and have their wages, and a word from the master himself to each. All the debts must be paid; wife and children given in charge to Campbell of Kinzeancleuch. There are three little girls, Martha, Margaret, Elizabeth, of seven and five and two, somewhere about. Friends are always coming into the room. One of them, Fairley of Braid, has dinner on the 16th by his bed, and persuades the sick man to join him. Knox hesitates at first; he is thinking of the fast for St. Bartholomew. Little Martha will be Fairley's daughter one day. Knox can never reward his friend enough, he says, for all he has done: One who can, will. The baby is to be Mrs. John Welsh, and will yet share a life and death worthy of Knox's daughter. He rises the last time to entertain two friends in his room, and has his dry joke over the fresh pipe of wine which has to be pierced for them: Will they be sure and see it finished after he is away? he will not wait till it is all drunk.

Another day he has the session of St. Giles' by his bedside, and delivers them a brief apology for his ministry. Two motives have moved him as a

minister, "fear of God and of his tribunal," and "desire to win men to the Lord."

Poor Kircaldy in the Castle has a last appeal from him; he goes back to their days in the galley together; "the man's soul is dear to him; he would not have it perish if he could save it." Regent Morton, too, has his word, courteous but plain. Both men, dying different deaths from this, remember these words.

The staircase is crowded in these days; there are many knocks at the door. He will see every one, and knows just what to say to each. Among them one pious woman begins to speak of praising God for the good he has done; but Knox stops her: "Tongue, tongue, lady; flesh of itself is over proud, and needs no means to esteem itself." He has no trust save in God's free mercy. One more conflict comes. Down through the valley he goes, sword in hand, as he has lived. There are heavy moans to-night; the watchers think it is the last agony. But he wakes very peaceful, as one who has vanquished, to tell them it is over now—a fierce onset of temptation. Thoughts would force themselves on his mind, that he had merited heaven by the faithfulness of his ministry. But he has fought them off, as Paul before him, with "What hast thou that thou hast not received? By the grace of God I am what I am. Not I, but the grace of God in me;" and now he knows the tempter will not return. So his last anchor is dropt, and plunges, where his first did, into the depths of grace, free, sovereign, divine.

Another sigh, and the words, "It is come." They whisper him the promises he has so often given them himself, and ask him for a token if it is peace. One hand goes up ; he sighs twice ; he is gone.

This very day three hundred and ten years ago, all Edinburgh gathered at St. Giles' to see her minister laid in his grave. They preached no funeral sermon over him, they raised no monument. His work is his monument. John Knox—that is the new Scotland, the reformed Scottish church. Our church history is a long gallery of splendid lives. In her many and various ages, our house has never yet wanted for a man. But they were all given when Knox came. In each of the after lives he lives again. In Melville we had his courage, grasp of character, and transparent candour ; in Henderson, his indomitable perseverance and heroic endurance of suffering ; in Rutherford, his clear logic and fervent love ; in Leighton, his faculty in Scripture and teacher's art ; in Chalmers, his grand conception of the nation's needs and the church's mission, and his grander gift of sacrifice.

If a larger place has been assigned and preserved among us to the "preaching of the Evangel" than among other reformed peoples ; if religion has been "more earnestly received ;" if the standard of morals has been raised ; if education has looked larger to the popular eye and lain nearer to the popular hand, with us than with others ; if the ministry and the community have moved more in step here than elsewhere ; if our land, less able to earn one part of the Vergilian greeting, "great mother of harvests,"

has fairly deserved the other, "great mother of men;" if advance in thought and speech, in action and in government, has been less bitterly anathematised and less blindly adored in our land than in other lands; if our most heart-stirring memories, our traditions and stories, be those of the heroes of our faith; if countrymen of our own have repeatedly proved that worldly objects are not the last weight in the balance, nor the last word in the debate; if they have "held fast the profession of their faith without wavering" before kings and armies, before inquisitors and dragonnades, before statesmen and houses of parliament, on the Bass Rock and in the Grassmarket, amid Marnoch snows and in Tanfield Hall; if, in a word, religion be allowed to have been hitherto the largest factor in our national life, and this little country, in virtue of it, be admitted to have given lessons to the great world; then we owe this, under God, first of all to one man, and that man was JOHN KNOX.

THE GIFT
OF THE CELTIC RACE
TO RELIGION



‘Columba on Iona smashes his currach.’

THE GIFT OF THE CELTIC RACE TO RELIGION.

THE places of men's birth and upbringing have a strange and powerful influence upon them. To move men deeply, you need only describe the scenes on which their eyes first fell, or in communion with which their minds opened and grew up. Picture a sea-view—high cliffs, with shelving inlets, sounding caves, the murmur of the tide—and one begins to listen. Or paint a lowland scene—great sweeps of well-tilled land, snug homesteads nestling in the trees or ringed by golden piles of grain—and another's attention is gained. Or draw the border-country—great rolling downs, large grassy shoulders, parted by a silken thread of stream—and a third ear is touched.

But, without controversy, the spell of spells is wielded by the mountains. Why, the mere mention of the name proves this. Not a Highlander's heart but responds. Not a Highlander, when he is touched, but takes as naturally as his own mournful plover or stricken deer to the hills. Take

children there, and watch how their great wondering eyes dwell on these grand objects, follow their giant outlines, are overawed by their huge forms. Let them live a hundred leagues off ever after, and they are not satisfied. The flat, monotonous country tires them; the rich, luxuriant verdure sates them; they would rather the rude barrenness, the stern strength, the tireless variety of their native hills. To retire there in sorrow is to be soothed, to fly there in labour is to be refreshed. In ill health a visit will bring healing, in age a return will renew the youth. To return there at the last, and repose in the graves of the fathers, is to be content. Strangers have felt the spell. Each summer fills our land with a thousand pilgrims, some in eagerness, some in weariness, but all bent on doing honour to our Scottish Highlands. None, however, know them, none love them, like their own sons—the men of the hills.

All places, further, have a moulding influence on their native inhabitants. Every one knows the type of man produced by the sea-coast, or by a pastoral country. But none, again, is more marked than the character of the races of the mountain. It is clearly definable by philosophy, traceable in history, and observable in literature. And that character, you who are children of the hills, is yours.

Whether the Celt, Gaul, Gael, Galatian, or by whatever other name he is known, is originally a hill-dwelling, hill-loving being, we need not stay to inquire. No doubt he once was master of the lowlands in France and Italy, in England, Ireland, and

Scotland as well. But history, in her earliest beginnings, and even more in her progress, has bound up your people, in our own land especially, with the hills. Religion, language, literature, material monuments—all have taken on an indelible influence from the hills.

When one asks, then, what gift you have to give to your country or the world, one must look for an answer to the Highlands. If the Psalmist, speaking of God's endowments and Israel's needs, wished for the things of our text—probably because mountain or hill was to him the most striking object in, and therefore image of, the whole land—we shall not err in seeking to trace together this evening what gift your race has been formed and fitted to make to the religion of the land.

Now, whether one seek a description of the elements of the Celtic character from Paul's Letter to them or Cæsar's Commentaries on them, from the oldest relics of their own bards or the experience of observers down to our own day—ay, or out of our own experience—one meets with very much the same reply. There are two outstanding features mentioned in every account of the people of the hills.

1. The feature which has most struck outsiders is their liveliness. By liveliness I understand brightness, sprightliness of mind in every direction. It includes brightness of understanding, quickness of apprehension, quickness of wit, readiness in "up-take," an eye for effect, a power of insight into things; a sense of what is delicate, or fine, or unusual; a command of detail. Again, there is

brightness in *feeling*, which we call impressibility, susceptibility, sensitiveness, power to kindle. Hence their keen poetic vein, the catching of that about a thing which thrills. Here, too, comes in their humour, the light irony, the graceful pleasantry, the playful allusion. Last, there is the brightness of *will*—what we call impulsiveness, promptness, eagerness to obey. These are liveliness in its strength. But this very strength is on another side *weakness*. Liveliness may easily become levity; brightness, lightness. Quickness in uptake may turn to inability to apply oneself and love for change. Brightness of feeling may tend to excitability; eagerness to difference, pride, aptitude to take offence. Swiftiness of resolve may become impetuosity, rashness, blindness to consequences, defect in following up, in staying power.

2. Another outstanding characteristic of the Celtic nature is, and has always been, its *devoutness*. Perhaps this is only a special form of the foregoing. For if we were asked what devoutness is, could we say anything better than that it is a kind of readiness in the will? This feature, like the other, one cannot help tracing to the habitat. For next to variety of scene, what strikes one among the mountains is their power to awe you. They seem to be not far from heaven, and to supply steps to lead thitherward. Their very confinement and compression—the narrowness of vision they permit you—seem fitted to draw the soul higher. However that may be, there is no doubt the men of the hills among ourselves, like those Paul addressed from

one of their crags at Athens, might well be described as "in all things more than devout." They feel as few do that readiness to adore, that joy in self-surrender, that reverence which is the root of all religion—for religion is simply "boundeness," submission, voluntary seriousness.

On the other hand, from this same source, unguided or misplaced, flow the worst defects of the Highland mind and the saddest passages of Highland story. Hence its dark, debasing, even cruel superstition; hence its rest in outward forms (the forms may be bald or ornate), *i.e.* its ritualism. Hence its outbreaks of debauch and orgy. Hence its passionate attachment to a name—which had no reality—when the reality had utterly and hopelessly altered. Hence its bigotry and intolerance, its suspicion of difference, its vindictiveness, its transference to persons of feelings of hate and loathing due only to a cause. "Noble gifts," one is fain to exclaim, "in good hands admirable, but in bad terrible." We shall not misspend our time to-night if we try to understand why they were given, and what God has done with them, and with our fathers through them—ay, and try to draw therefrom some lessons for ourselves, their sons.

1. *The Seedtime of the Celtic Church up to the Departure of the Romans.*—Rome was the divinely-appointed schoolmaster of the civilised world, preparing it to receive the Gospel of Christ. It was under Rome's eagles that the dove with the olive branch flew over to Britain. It was under that

mighty mailed hand that the peoples of the earth lay for a moment hushed and still, that the footsteps of the Child among men might be heard.

Of none was this more true than those lively, restless ancestors of ours. For a little, then, they ceased those tireless roving of theirs, which, three or four centuries before, had carried them from the first seats, where the lifting veil of history shows us them, to the west of the Rhine, southwards over Italy, eastwards over Greece, and into Asia Minor, where Paul met and evangelised them. For a little they must compose those endless disputes and seditions and revolutions, those feuds and fights, immersed in which Cæsar had found them. Suddenly in the midst of this strange race, "disjoined from the circle of earth" (Virgil), a few years before Christ, appeared the terrible Roman Emperor, and bade these movements cease. But neither they nor he knew who he was, the forerunner of the Prince of Peace. For four hundred years South Britain was a province of Rome. Some one from Rome first brought us the Gospel. Was it the Crescens, perhaps a Celtic freeman, who, after a visit to Rome, left again for his native Gaul (2 Tim. iv. 10)? Was it the Claudia, as some skilfully argue, of Paul's last prison epistle (2 Tim. iv. 21), the one woman who dared the dark descent of the Tullianum to be near the condemned apostle, whose name has travelled down to us on a Roman monument in South Britain as that of a British princess? Or shall we not say, with even greater likelihood, that the missionary was one of the Neronian legion-

aries, whose post as Paul's sentinel in the "hired house" on the Seven Hills, gave him such a remarkable "entrance" and influence throughout the entire Prætorian Barracks, whose presence made him so content to be cooped up in the little lodging of his first imprisonment? Probably some Celt—possibly some Briton—may have been among the guardsmen. Surely some one disciple out of the entire barracks served afterwards in one of the legions ordered to Britain. And if so, no other answer is needed to the question how the Gospel got the ear of the Celt, Icenian, Cassibelaunian, Trinobant. For a changed trooper is not the man to hide his colours. But however that be, it is certain (from the sequel) that the Celts in the Roman province of Britain received the Gospel within the first three centuries after Christ—those extraordinary centuries of Christian life, Christian testimony, Christian triumphs, Christian martyrdom.

Of the progress, the trials, the upbuilding of the Celtic Church we know nothing but what may be gathered from the common experience of contemporary Christendom—the free though slowly stiffening forms, the fierce but gradually abating struggles of the brethren would be hers. It is not till near the end of the period (*c.* 400 A.D.) that the separate story comes into light. Civil Rome, having done her part, withdrew. The divine arm, pressing the new Northern nation upon her, made her faint at heart, and her grasp all along the outposts of the Empire began to relax. In the general commotion our Saxon ancestors, who were heathen, began to

move from their fenlands in Sleswick, and coveted the meadows of Kent. They came in the interests of freedom; for Rome, with all her gifts of peace and law and government, had brought despotism and slavery into Southern Britain. The long enfeebled and now deserted Celt went down, like swathes of autumn corn, before the stout stroke of the Saxon arm. Fleeing to the hills and corners of the land—to the West and North, to Cornwall, Wales, and Scotland—he carried on for centuries the ever hopeless, but never useless, conflict of Arthur and his heroes, whose highest and glorified side is seen in *The Idylls of the King*. It was to this strange providence of invasion and war and defeat that our Church owed its original character and its historical existence.

“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts viii. 4). That might have been written of the Church of the century. “Now they that were scattered abroad from the persecution that arose” from Hengist and Horsa and the other Saxon heathen, “travelled as far as Cambria and Hibernia and Alba, preaching the word to none but the Celts only.” “And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts xi. 19, 21).

Possibly our Celtic Church was a missionary church before the time of persecution; just as the mother church at Jerusalem had been. There were in her, we know, children of princes, apostles, like Peter and John, who went out before the spur of

suffering pricked them. Ninian, a chieftain's son, who had been to Rome, the very earliest name in the hereditary Celtic Church, surviving only in a few somewhat doubtful tales, and in a few most unquestionable stories, which attest the reality and the reach of his missionary labours, is one of these. It was just after his time, however, that the wonderful awakening and quickening of the Celts in the North and West took place; which we can reasonably attribute only to agencies similar to those which have moved the Church and the world from the beginning until now—the forces, I mean, of general persecution on the one hand and of general evangelisation on the other. In these days it was that the Celts of the hills, hitherto heathen, and naturally prejudiced against Roman Christianity—the dove perched on the eagle—became obedient to the faith of their fugitive fellow-countrymen. Christ conquered Finn, or, at least, the sons of Finn, and recrudéscent Druidism began to be Arthurian Christianity. Who accomplished this silent but splendid revolution? Who tamed warlike Strathclyde and savage Strathmore, that not Agricola, not Severus Imperator could tame? Who on the crumbling ramparts of Forth and Clyde reared a kingdom and a civilisation which needed no walls? Ay, who beyond the second wall of Tyne and Solway carried that system and civilisation to heathen Saxony? Who took currach and sailed over seas the Roman galleys would not dare, and conquered for Christ Erin the untamable? Who taught captured and uncaptured Celt

alike to turn round and capture their Saxon conquerors? Who in the long centuries of the popular migrations, when Europe was one rolling ocean of emigrants, kept in her safe fastnesses society secure, learning undimmed, religion pure? Who in these ages once and again broke the cordon of heathenism and unsettlement, and planted the cross on the mountains of North Italy and Switzerland? Nay, is it too bold a question, who kept the old lamp of truth brilliant, the old fire of liberty hot, and handed them to Europe in happier times? Who but the children of the persecuted Celtic Church of the fifth century? What Ninian began but could not finish, that was done once and for all within a century by the native evangelists of Albin and Ireland.

We all know more or less the central figure of that period, the representative character of that time, the image of the best type of his countrymen in every time—Patrick, the Evangelist, the Missionary of Ireland. Herdboy from the Clydesdale hills, lineal descendant of Highland David, and ancestor of Highland Zwingli, and Duff, and Livingstone, Patrick is an incarnation of the Celtic virtue Christianised — “sanctified restlessness.” Rome, the represser, withdrawn, the innate Celtic love for raiding and roving had returned. In Patrick’s day (whether at his prompting or not) the Irish Scots came over and settled in Scotland. It was the same impulse in another shape that made our herd-boy a traveller. Conversion was to him one prolonged, compelling call to make conquest of others.

Patrick

He overran the island in his lifetime. He found Ireland heathen, he left it Christian. Like Paul in Asia Minor and at Malta, he trusted the divine seed with perfect faith to the untried soil of a simple race, letting it take the form natural to its surroundings. Like Paul he ordained elders or bishops almost wherever he found believers. He asked for no hierarchy, for he was indebted to none. Because common kindred was the basis of the tribal life, common and equal brotherhood was to be the badge of the new Christian life. Because hereditary chieftainship was the rule of the tribal government, fatherhood was to be the principle of the spiritual, Christian society. No external source of authority was sought—there was none to seek. Even if Rome had been thought of, Rome was cut off by the heathen. Indeed, almost all Patrick and his fellows had from Rome were the Roman letters her subject Celts had learned in their Cæsar or Virgil at the schools of Bath or Tours, or the capital, before the Romans left. But with these they had the “living oracles.” To that Gospel Patrick and his companions continually appeal; that is his authority, his Pope, his council; it makes him, like a herd-lad long before him, “wiser than the ancients.” The church needed for his countrymen was not a continuous institution, or a central authority without error, to convey so many dogmas and practices ensuring salvation to all who came in outward contact with them. What he wanted, for his countrymen and for himself, was so many definite companies of believing men, who had them-

selves been met, and stopped, and commissioned by Christ, set down all over the land, continually launching themselves upon the unbelief and immorality all around, only abiding at home to teach, or returning home to recruit and study, in order ever the more effectively to launch themselves forth again.

Such was the Church of our fathers in the fifth century, such was the Church of their children, your fathers, unto the six and fiftieth generation, fifty years ago. Is that to be our Church and the Church of our children—I mean, a message-bearing, a missionary, an aggressive Church? My brothers, the answer to that question lies in the homes of your people in this city here, or away up the glens and on the moors—homes where there is an open door to you as young men and as Highlanders—where there is a clear call to enter and make friends with the inmates, to share with them the story of their lives, to share with them the story of your own, to share with them the story of the life of Jesus. I do not know what may be your particular call, or calling, but I do know, that to me by far the most precious part of a not altogether poor or contracted experience is enshrined in the hours spent, during years of school or college, in such exercises, or even holier ones, by humbler firesides, by bedsides, by cradles, with children. Ay, and at times with the lower animals for an audience—while the wood embers of some great log were smouldering to that fine ash of theirs on the cottage floor, or the blue smoke went up like incense to the

almost visible blue above. Few begin the missionary life, be it as teacher, physician, missionary, after the age of twenty-one.

2. *The Bloom-time in the Middle Ages.*—The Celtic Church, I said, was formed once and for all by Patrick of Strathclyde, or within a century of his time. Thenceforward for seven centuries it bloomed and fruited, shed its blossoms, planted its fruit. The simple brotherhoods became great religious houses; the gatherings of disciples grew to venerable seats of learning. The distinctive mark of it was still its missionariness.

This mark, indeed, is written broad and deep across the forehead of the first and foremost man of this period, whom this and many another congregation love to commemorate in their name, our own Columba. He was a child of Patrick's church, and dedicated by his mother, Princess Eithne, another Eunice, from a child to God, God's Work, God's Word. Born to command, after a lengthened course of study, in which he visited the most famous of Patrick's schools, he began work by breaking ground for himself. Derry, Durrow, and many another spot sacred ever since to piety and letters, were successively his mission districts, his mission charges. Each of these as he left it flowered and fruited into other mission communities. Of all he was the spiritual father, to all he admitted new believers by oath or vow, just as the Prince, his father, would have administered the oath to all outsiders who wished to join the clan. The very

success of his work led to its termination. The number of his converts placed him in an enviable position; his natural connections made him more enviable still; jealousy was the result; the old spirit of irritation and fondness for dispute was awakened. We can only thank God that the issue was to make Columba enlarge the horizon of his evangelisation. The dovecot was fluttered, the doves fell out; Columba spread his wings—Ireland was now too narrow for him.

End

I am not to try to repeat the old, old story, that will never be old while Christ's name is dear to any in this island—a story more poetical, more like God's making, than all the ballads of all the bards in both languages. I am only to ask you before you are old, before you are at the time when even a Celt must cease to be impressible, because it is time for him to begin making impressions on others—before you are thirty, I say, go to Iona, and ask God's blessing on your visit. Stand on the sandy beach at the south end of the island, and look south and west, and in the glory of the descending sun, see if memory and imagination cannot make out a strange craft coming up with great leaps and lurches, under the steady stroke of twelve stout pairs of arms. Listen and you will hear the prophet's voice as he salutes the leader, as he stands up from beside the tiller in his long white tunic and heavy Highland cloak, his great leonine features crowned by his shaven temples and backed by his long locks swayed by the wind and the boat's way. "Who art thou that farest so far, and fliest, white to my

windows?" And—do you hear?—the leader makes answer, chanting with that voice of his, which Adamnan says was like thunder, only his upturned face tells you it is Heaven he is addressing: "Verily, O Lord, it is the islands that do homage." In sooth, and the ships of the west at the head of them.

Columba, the Irish Celt, did for Scotland what Patrick, the Briton, had done for Ireland. He was to it what Knox afterwards was to his contemporaries, in the judgment of the best, "the restorer of the Gospel of God," "the reformer of a kingdom." The little homestead on the western island, liker an African kraal than anything, with its creel huts, creel dining-room, creel smithy and joiner's shed, creel church, walled in by a mound of earth and stone, with barn and kiln, byre and stall outside, was for centuries the Holyrood of Scotland. Thither he transferred the self-propagated, self-planted, self-supported, and self-ruled—in fact, the clan-modelled—society that he had read of in his Acts of the Apostles, and had realised in Moville and in Derry, a church which our fathers built and handed down to their children to-day.

It was his own aim—he made it that of others—to repeat such churches all over Scotland. The practice of Iona was the single life, but not the imposed rule. Each brotherhood had its own things in common, like each tribe, but property was not forsworn; there was one father in each house, and one at Iona over all the houses; but it was a kind of family headship—often it passed from sire to son

—and all were brethren. With this system he, like Patrick, insinuated Christianity into the tribe-life of the country—Scotland and Pictland alike. Columba himself, indeed, first gained footing on the island as clansman of Connal, chief of Dalriad Scots. Iona, set on the borders of Pict and Scot, evangelised either without distinction; and, but a century and a half after Columba's time, she bound the two now Christian peoples into a common league for Christ and Scotland against the heathen Dane. The two half-circlets of Kenneth M'Alpin's double crown were inherited by Columba. Columba's hand brought the old Pict symbols in between the arms of the Scots (Iona) Cross, on all the Christian monuments which Celtic zeal and loyalty reared along the east coast in triumph.

I said I would not repeat Columba's story—how he turned the tribes into congregations, the witched wells into places of healing, the fairy-circles into houses of God; how he made the sennachies turn singers of Jesus, so bringing into the service of the Church the magic gift of rhyme, and bringing religion right into the hearts where reading and writing were unknown; how he made Christ every man's druid and abbot, his priest and father, to whom alone one must confess, who alone could forgive; how his children did the same for West and Central Saxony—a second herdboy from the Lammermuir Hills becoming English Osur's and Egfrith's evangelist; while Iona it was which reared Oswald, the first Saxon Christian king. But one thing I would have you ponder well in him—

for it is part of our Celtic Church heritage—I mean, the avidity for learning he showed and enjoined. As a child his mother, we are told, had had him trained “in wisdom”—the wisdom which saves—and the taste thus early imbibed remained quick and keen to the last. Ten years at college he did not think too long; he thought no journey long or tiresome if it led to a seat of learning. The companions he chose for his great missionary foray were *learned* men. Among the seedbags, the gardeners’ and carpenters’ tools on board the currach were wrapped up manuscripts of the Gospels. Like him he surely must have been who, lying under sentence, sent for “books and parchments” to his condemned cell. Like Paul, by example and will to the last he enjoined on his disciples to give “diligence to study, to reading, and to preach the Word.” Nor was his the dilettante’s study. He himself practised the drudgery of the desk, painfully transcribing, painfully memorising what he read. Like Paul, the last act we know of him is his labour to place on parchment a few more words from his Master for his younger brethren.

Now, again I say, I know not your several circumstances nor your avocations. But this I will say, that whatever your stage of preparation, whatever your profession—if there be the preparation and profession of the Christian man at all—be it teacher, doctor, evangelist—know one book well—English or Gaelic—there is little fear of you; ignore it, and there is little hope. Embrace all

means of knowing it, by regular private use, by scholastic equipment, by waiting upon the stated means of grace; above all, by the special means which is furnished for us young men in the Fellowship Association. After home discipline and studious habits, I know nothing for aiding and encouraging careful and scientific Bible study which will compare with a prayerful and painstaking attendance on such a society. I intended to have said something on some other outstanding features of the Celtic Church as it took shape under Columba—the Dignity of Woman, the Standard of Discipline, the Practice of Psalmody, but I must hasten on.

3. *Its Withering Time under Foreign Control.*—

These seven hundred years of peace, so still as to be almost inaudible, and of fruitfulness so abundant as to be marked half-way down the map of Europe, from Friesland to St. Gall and Bobbio, from the Apennines to Burgundy, were succeeded by seven lean centuries of discord and of barrenness. From the end of the eleventh century to the end of the eighteenth, one looks in vain for the followers of Patrick and of Columba, of Cuthbert and Columbane. The succession did not cease at once, of course, for two centuries after Margaret's time, when the united Scots people arose and threw off the Norman yoke, though it was the Lowlands who led, it was the clans who filled the ranks. Of six Scottish Church writers, from David to Bruce, the names of more than half their works tell that they maintained the spiritual independence and the scholarly

Bible study of their fathers. It was the Celtic spirit that spoke in one of Wallace's battle-cries: "No intruded priest on this side the border"; it was the Celtic spirit which sent Bruce's men into battle, shoulder to shoulder, chiefly clansmen, side by side, shivering for ever the distinctions of Feudalism. It was in Celtic certainly that the sighs of those thousand hearts ascended that Sabbath eve, when English Edward saw the whole army bend the knee at Bannockburn. They were Highland hills, in Argyll and Perthshire and Aberdeen, which for many a day saved and concealed the saviour of his country, the winner of Scottish independence, just as they were Highland accents which spoke in his own and his nobles' protest against the papal jurisdiction.

The great revolution of the sixteenth century, which cuts this period in two, had its own legacies and gifts from the ancient Church and the old inhabitants of the land. If Patrick Hamilton, the proto-martyr, was only connected by name (Abbot of Fearn) with the Highlands, it was no mere accident that Wishart testified and burned but a few yards from the foundations of one of the oldest Culdee churches in the country. Patrick's articles and Wishart's testimony there asserted the scriptural liberty of the old Celtic Church. The first work printed in Celtic was Knox's *Book of Prayers*, and Argyllshire and the Western Islands, Columba's adopted home, welcomed the new doctrine. Still, the statement remains true that the Church of the Highlands was never, as a whole,

revisited by the old quickening breath from about 1100 to 1800.

1074 The year 1074 may be remembered as that in which the blight may be said to have been first distinctly seen. Then it was that the children of the old clan-modelled, self-propagated, self-governed Church gave way before the hierarchical, sacramental, papal Church of Rome. Scottish religion came to the Conference in Dunfermline ignorant of compulsory celibacy, compulsory poverty, compulsory confession, papal absolutism ; it left, arranged in regular monasteries, parishes, mumbling Latin or Norman-English—Margaret's tongue—forbidden to marry, forbidden to hold property, ordered to confess to the priest and to swear to the papal chair. No doubt Norman Feudalism had to come to Britain—in Church and State—God's instrument, carrying Europe through times of tumult and transition, crushing out the spirit of civil strife and rebellion, pressing out the cry for the freedom of a common brotherhood. And for what followed our Celtic fathers had themselves in two respects to blame. They should not by their strifes have called the stranger in ; it was the consciousness of these strifes which made them weak to stand and speak God's and Scotland's word before kings and not be moved. But the foreign government proved fatal to the Celtic Church. All the old defects of the Celtic character found free room in the Norman system. The accumulation of wealth in the religious houses fostered indolence both of hand and head—the lands were always growing larger, the

libraries less; the tendency to found great centres of church life and pomp impoverished the outlying parts of the land; Highland parishes were attached by scores to the great abbeys and left to starve under uninspected vicars; the immense powers feèd to lord and cleric alike became so many sops to the old tribal turbulence; and, worst of all, the new—but never observed—rule of single life made religion a standing immorality; the old clan succession from father to son virtually went on.

So it was that when one arose to cleanse God's house of traffickers with the small cords of Christ's Word, wielded by the old indignant sinews of the Celtic arm, he found that it was outwardly more corrupt than in any other part of Europe. The reformation was so complete because the corruption was so manifest and uniform. But little of the corruption was older than two centuries with us, and almost none of it was more than four. Celtic Scotland felt the Reformation less than any part of the land, partly because there were no men from among themselves to lead them through the threatening gulf and the black night to the new land beyond—their natural leaders, like Reid of Orkney, men of originality and independence, sticking, in mistaken loyalty, to the less important of the two kings and the two kingdoms, or, like Huntly, taking arms for it, and all their clan going after them—partly because the dangerous rights conferred on the lords had turned into a permanent feeling of feud between Highland and Lowland—a feud that left half Aberdeen dead on Red Harlaw

four hundred years ago, and is not dead yet—that nothing but Christianity can dissipate. What that false loyalty and feud feeling led to at Dunbar, and at Glencoe, and at Culloden, under Montrose and Claverhouse, you know. I think one who had studied and had understood these seven centuries of the Celtic withering time, the mistakes that mark, the defects that come out in them, the false independence ending in loss of independence, the false loyalty ending in servility, the sinking into sloth and superstition, would know, as few do, his countrymen's infirmity, and would be wise, in God's hand, to lead them through like dangers to-day.

4. *Its Second Spring-time.*—It was when Britain writhed under the heel of the Saxon—1400 years ago—that she turned to Christ, she revived and testified for Christ. It was when the Scots were pressed by the Picts that they received the Gospel and gave it to their oppressors. It was when the Highlands were staggered to their feet after the cruel and brutal awakening they got at Culloden and under Cumberland, that they turned again to Christ.

The story of the Revival of religion in the Centre, West, and North of Scotland is not so old but that men up in life may remember relatives who spoke with contemporaries of it. The very destitution of the North and West touched Christian hearts in the South with pity, and the S.P.C.K. began its endeavour to meet that destitution by the employ-

ment of teachers and catechists, and the dissemination of religious literature. Thus began that race of men, of whom Dugald Buchanan was easily the chief—men with the Gospel in their hearts and a song on their lips, who raided and foraged for the Great Captain. Thus the living oracles were returned to the Celtic race in their own tongue. Thus again Highland herdboys, by peat-fire or on lone moor, heard the word and spirit of Patrick and Columba, and set forth for colleges, and returned to make the name of Macdonald and Macintosh and Macleod apostolic in the North. Then it was that laymen like the Haldanes began to imitate them. Then it was the Neil Livingstones moved from Ulva to the Mainland, and the Duffs were brought into the fold at the foot of Ben-y-Vrackie. At the same time the very beauty—ay, and hardships—of the land of the rebellion increased the Southern interest in its people. But it was when the united Scottish Church through all her borders began to feel the breath of revival, and the old, half-smothered, but never wholly stifled spirit of her ancestral liberties began to awake and assert itself, that the Celtic populations recognised the spirit of their fathers, and prepared to follow wherever it led. Then it was they once more recognised a worthy object for their passionate attachment. There are many heroic pages in the annals of the Disruption, but none more stir the blood than the simple story of how the people of our hill country brought in all the wealth of devotion to the old covenanting standard which many of their fathers

had mistaken and fallen in the effort to overthrow. Well did one of themselves—herself a poet, and sympathising with these last struggles of an often-defeated race—when she sought a name to describe the country of the immortal, call it by the quality she had most admired in her fellow-clansmen—"the land of the leal." It was in those days of revival that she and others besides her learned to pour all the hereditary feeling which had once attached to an earthly allegiance into the far worthier form of a loyalty towards Heaven. For her too, and for many another, there was still One they would have given all for "over the water," whom they never spoke or sang of but to those who loved Him, or those they thought might be taught to love Him—the incomparable, unalterable Object of their affection, of whom they never spake or sang but with a tear not far from the eye—who would surely have His own again; and that was all they wanted, all they lived for. Only it was no earthly monarch now—it was one Jesus.

My brothers, I thought to say to-night how you might do this land of Scotland service—to point out some of the sores and dangers that call for strong hands and clear heads to deal with them in your time—the questions of government, and social life, and upbringing of the young. But I am moved to make end rather by raising another question—the raising and right settlement of which will alone make you fit to do any lasting service either to church or land. I am old enough to creep back (with the brief but clear recollection of a child of

five or thereby) to the revival of '59—which was, I have been told, a faint shadow of the greater Celtic revivals from the fifth century to 1859. There were meetings in that summer which have helped me often since to realise what the Apostle's first evangelistic visit to Galatia must have been—a whole country-side met in eager but orderly array, on a great grassy sward, rolling a psalm—the 66th to Torwood, the 40th to Coleshill—to Heaven, that was like the many waters of the Revelation, and then hanging rapt on the preacher's prayer or the preacher's word. That theme never ended without one which went home. It was that which asked every hearer present whether he had come under personal allegiance to the Great Captain, the King of kings. I have seen strong men deeply moved under such appeals. All the best men and women I have known in the Highlands had made a most definite response to them. I make the appeal to you as it was made twenty-five years ago to me. I have spoken of your heritage by nature, children of the Hills; it is one I would not exchange for anything. But there are elements in it that call for the stamp of the King's seal and the sway of the King's sceptre. I speak to those who have a natural aptitude for religion—affections to cling to it and be satisfied with it; emotions to be kindled and safeguarded by it; and imagination to be illuminated by it, to illuminate and body it forth.

Christ crucified can be, has been, lifted up before your eyes. He is written in broad lines on your

history, in miniature on the mysterious runes of your heart. Have you understood it all? Have you seen Him in the centre of it all? Your story and life, church and land, are dead and indecipherable inscriptions without Him. Oh take the oath of allegiance if you have never taken it before; or take it again. Ask Him, and He will teach you, as He taught Patrick and Columba, some "lorica" to sing as you pass through the valley of temptation and between the narrow passages of your opening career. And some day the great grace may be given you, in your small measure, which was given him in his great one, to say it or sing it to some weary ear of your own countrymen.

Repaired by
Robb Armstrong
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